

DFEH News Brief

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EAST PALO ALTO APARTMENT OWNERS PAY \$25,000 TO SETTLE ALLEGED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES

ELK GROVE, CA -- The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) announced today that the owners of an East Palo Alto apartment house have paid \$25,000 to settle a lawsuit that accused them of giving preference to female Caucasian tenants and refusing to rent apartments to African-American males.

"Equal access to housing is a fundamental right, and I'm proud of the department's efforts to protect Californians from any discrimination," said Governor Schwarzenegger's Secretary of State and Consumer Services, Rosario Marin. "This settlement is yet another example of how important and relevant the Fair Employment and Housing Act remains to this day."

The DFEH lawsuit alleged that in November 2004, the apartment owners ignored several telephone messages from Junius White, an African-American single man, when he responded to an advertisement for a studio apartment on Euclid Avenue. When he showed up and submitted an application anyway, the owners allegedly ignored several more phone messages from White asking the status of his application.

In response to Mr. White's complaint, Project Sentinel, a local fair housing group, sent 11 "testers" to the apartment house to pose as potential renters. Two of the testers were single African-American males. Like Mr. White, they left numerous phone messages with the owners. The DFEH said none of the phone calls from any of the three black males were ever returned.

Five other testers were Caucasian females, all of whom received active encouragement from one of the owners. The resident manager reportedly made a special point of telling two of the Caucasian women that 80 percent of his tenants were single women.

"In this case, we found compelling evidence of discrimination against male tenants in general and African-American males in particular," said DFEH Director Phyllis Cheng. "This violates California's Fair Employment and Housing Act, which prohibits race and sex discrimination."

In settling out of court, the owners of the apartment house, Joseph Balaty and Fred Kiani, did not admit to any liability.

The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment and public accommodations and from hate violence. For more information, visit our Web site at www.dfeh.ca.gov.

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